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SUBJECT: PROPOSAL FOR U.S. BIOTECH SPEAKER TO VISIT GHANA IN FY 2010

REFS: A. 09 STATE 122732
[1](#)B. 09 ABUJA 1682

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: Embassy Accra requests \$13,700 in FY 2010 EEB biotech outreach funds for a U.S. biotechnology expert in agricultural production and development to visit Ghana for one week to engage with government officials and legislators, academics, public audiences, and the media on the merits of biotechnology and the importance of regulating biotech products. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. Per Ref A request, Embassy Accra requests \$13,700 in FY 2010 EEB biotech outreach funds in order to fund a one-week public speaking visit to Ghana of a U.S. expert on agricultural biotechnology.

Biotech Background in Ghana

[1](#)3. Ghana has not yet adopted comprehensive legislation regulating the production and sale of biotech products. The Government of Ghana is currently considering a draft Biosafety Bill that was prepared with international technical assistance (including from USAID), but the draft legislation has not yet been submitted to the Parliament. In May 2008, the Parliament did pass a Biosafety Legislative Instrument, which allows for field trials of biotech products, but not their commercialization. The Legislative Instrument thus allows for scientific advancement in Ghana while the executive and legislative branches of government continue to consider the merits of a comprehensive biosafety law.

[1](#)4. Public opinion on biotechnology is divided, with some editorials questioning the wisdom and safety of genetically engineered crops. Other observers have argued that the higher crop yields and the greater resistance to pests associated with genetically modified seeds could help Ghana more effectively deal with issues of food security and the likely impact on farming from climate change.

[1](#)5. While public opinion remains divided, some biotech products are already being sold in Ghana. In addition, genetically modified cotton and other crops, which are grown in Burkina Faso (Ghana's northern neighbor), may already be growing in Northern Ghana, or these seeds will soon migrate to and be grown in that region of the country. While current law allows for field trials of biotech crops, no experimental fields are currently under cultivation, as far as we are aware, though some U.S. companies have begun the processes of requesting permission to engage in such trials in country.

[1](#)6. U.S. food exports to Ghana, valued at \$86 million in 2008, consist primarily of rice, poultry and consumer products. Ghana is the largest commercial market for U.S. rice in West Africa, with

U.S. producers maintaining about a third of the Ghanaian rice market over the last several years.

Biotech Speaker Program

¶7. Given that the current biotech state of play in Ghana is similar to that in Nigeria, where a U.S. biotech speaker was successfully programmed in FY 2009 (Ref B), we believe that a U.S. biotechnology expert could meaningfully engage with government officials and legislators, academics, public audiences, and the media about the merits of agricultural biotechnology. We anticipate that a U.S. expert could visit for one week and engage with Ghanaian audiences in Accra (two days), Kumasi (two days) and Tamale (one day), which are located in key growing regions.

¶8. We would work with Ghana's National Biosafety Committee to program the U.S. expert speaker, as well as with other local expert groups in Ghana, including biotechnology experts at the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), which is based in Accra, and at Ghana's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). In Accra, the speaker could engage with executive and legislative branch officials on the merits of biotechnology. In addition, the visit could include local radio and TV interviews, and a media roundtable event at which journalists could interact with the U.S. expert. Media events may also include local Ghanaian agricultural specialists, in order to encourage a healthy debate on the subject of biotechnology and how advanced science could help Ghana more effectively deal with issues of food security and the likely impact on farming from climate change. The visit may also include an embassy-hosted event at which government and legislative decision-makers could interact with biotechnology and agricultural

experts. There could also be public speaking events at FARA, CSIR, the University of Ghana in Accra, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology in Kumasi, and the University for Development Studies in Tamale.

¶9. We anticipate the total cost of a one-week visit would be \$13,700, as follows:

\$7,000: Travel, lodging and per diem for U.S. Speaker

\$1,000: Travel, lodging and per diem for one embassy officer to join U.S. speaker in Kumasi and Tamale

\$1,600: Fuel for embassy motorpool vehicle, lodging and per diem for embassy driver in Kumasi and Tamale

\$1,000: Honoraria for U.S. speaker

\$1,000: Travel, lodging and per diem for one Ghanaian biotechnology and agricultural specialist to participate in events in Kumasi and Tamale

\$1,500: Expenses for hall rentals, refreshments and meals at U.S. speaker's events

\$600: Honoraria for Ghanaian specialists at events

Embassy points of contact for this proposal are Regional Environment, Science and Technology Officer Aaron Fishman (fishmanad@state.gov), Agricultural Attache Ali Abdi (based in Lagos; ali.abdi@fas.usda.gov), and USAID Ghana Agricultural Adviser John Mullenax (jmullenax@usaid.gov).

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